



# Getting Started With Design Thinking

## Define a Problem

Design Thinking is not just for a woodshop or art class. It can be used to teach anything from literature to mathematics. The Generative Topic is the key to great Design Thinking. You have a great opportunity to engage your students based on the words you use. If you are going to be in a position to inspire your students you need to feel inspired yourself. Most of our traditional topics can very quickly be given a new lease of life by developing a more generative topic title. We need to be able to literally propel our learners into the topic with these few words. The title is their first introduction to a design thinking project and so should immediately inspire them to be involved.<sup>1</sup>

You as teachers will be able to refresh existing content in short order and create an inquiry-focused title that really kicks things off well. These titles will help teachers to plan ahead what their design thinking work will look like, the places where it merges with other subjects and the curriculum coverage they can achieve.

### Your Next Steps

- Find some colleagues to discuss your topics.
- Share a traditional topic title and curriculum goals - where do you normally start?
- Share ideas for new provocative titles.
- Record every single idea, one under the other on some large paper.
- Turn any questions into statements.
- Keep adding ideas until you hit upon a natural stop.
- Take a look on TED.com at the talk titles - search key terms related to your topic - TED talks have some great titles you can draw inspiration from.
- Share your ideas so far with someone else to get some perspective.
- Discuss which title ideas you like the most so far and why?

### Checklist for Generative Topic Titles

Use the following questions to scrutinize your title ideas once you have a couple you like:

- Does it pass the "So what?" test?
- Is it epic and big scale, not tiny and 'fake'?
- Does it cover more than just one curriculum subject or topic?
- Does it spark your natural curiosity?
- Is there enough potential material in which learners can immerse themselves?
- Can it be made accessible, feasible to access for every learner?

Bonus question: When you share it with other people do they make that "Oooooo, mmmmm?" sound? (You'll know it when you hear it!)

Once you have the generative topic title, you can now generate the specific questions or problem to be given. An example:

*Community for Unity: How can our community unite to benefit our school?*

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<sup>1</sup> Ford, P. Design Thinking: Immersion 1 Develop a Generative Topic Title. Retrieved from <http://notash.com/lab>

## Create a Project Plan

Once you have decided on the challenge/problem that you would like to work on, you can start to plan your design project. The first task will be to find the right amount of time for the project. The beauty of Design Thinking is that you can do a project in a small block of time or over an extended amount of time. It only depends on the depth of the challenge and the product that you desire to receive at the end of the process.

## Do it a day or a small block of time

A vertical timeline template for a single day project plan. It is titled "DAY" at the top. The timeline starts at 8am and ends at 5pm. The timeline is divided into six yellow blocks, each with an icon and a label: 1. 8am - 9am: "8.00-9.00" with a star icon. 2. 9am - 10am: "9.00-10.00" with a magnifying glass icon. 3. 10am - 11am: "10.00-11.00" with a lightbulb icon. 4. 11am - 12pm: "11.00-12.00" with a gear icon. 5. 12pm - 1pm: "12.00-1.00" with a clock icon. 6. 1pm - 2pm: "1.00-2.00" with a clock icon. The timeline ends at 5pm. The bottom of the timeline is a grey area with three horizontal lines for notes.

## Immerse over a week

A weekly project plan template showing days from Monday to Friday. Each day has a yellow block for the day's main activity, followed by a grey area for notes. The days and their activities are: MON: "8.00-9.00" with a star icon; TUE: "8.00-9.00" with a magnifying glass icon; WED: "8.00-9.00" with a magnifying glass icon; THU: "8.00-9.00" with a gear icon; FRI: "8.00-9.00" with a clock icon. The timeline starts at 8am and ends at 5pm. The bottom of the timeline is a grey area with three horizontal lines for notes.

Whatever the length of time you choose, the process is the same. You will just get more in-depth thinking, collaboration and creativity with an extended time frame!

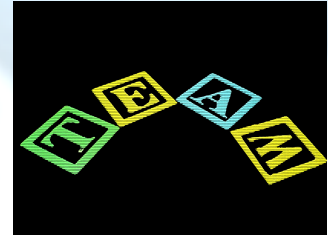
## Prepare Before You Start

Before you begin, here are a few tips that will help you make the most out the process.

### Teams

The team is stronger than any individual- you know this well as a guiding principle of education. And collaboration is inherent to Design Thinking: having a team of students who offer different strengths and perspectives will enable the team to solve complex challenges. But team work isn't always easy. Team dynamics can be as limiting as they are empowering. Here's how to build a great team.

- Start small – groups of two or three are a good starting point
- Choose groups with differing ability and perspectives
- Assign roles – assign roles to each of the students so they are clear as to what is expected



### Spaces

A dedicated space, even if just a wall, gives the team a physical reminder of their work. It allows them to put up notes from their research and to be continuously immersed in their learning. Shared visual reminders help track the progress of the project and helps students stay focused on the challenge. When doing a Design Thinking project over an extended period of time, it can be helpful to have team change spaces from time to time. The change in the space can help teams get unstuck when the work gets more challenging.



### Materials

The Design Thinking process is visual, tactile and experimental. You often create an overview that's visible for everyone on the team or come up with a quick sketch to explain your idea. Make sure that you have supplies on hand that make it easy to work in that fashion. Most of the stages will require some type of technology, post-it notes or pad of paper or a flipchart and markers. The more materials that you can supply, the more diverse the product that students will create. Remember, the teams may prototype in several ways including: sketch, model, role-play, diagram, mock-up, storyboard, presentation, create an ad, or other multimedia product.

